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Short abstract

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Successful and cost neutral strategies to increase organic food used in public kitchens: results from the Danish Organic Action Plan 2020

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Introduction

This conversion project was conducted in 2015-16 as part of the Danish Organic Action Plan 2020. The objective of this study was to measure the effect of an organic cost neutral food conversion on the percentage of organic food used in Danish public kitchens and to gain knowledge of practical strategies being effective in increasing the organic food used in the public kitchens.

Methods

Study design included baseline data collection, training sessions for all kitchens employees, goal setting, strategy development and implementation for each kitchen, and end point data collection.

Setting

174 public kitchens from 10 municipalities participated in an organic conversion project performed by a consultant corporation. Three types of public kitchen were included: childcare (n=52), worksite canteens (N=14) and elderly care (n=108).

Results

Significant increases in organic food percentage from baseline to end point were 29 percentage points ($P < 0.001$) during a period of 1½-2 years (baseline: 24% to endpoint: 53%).

The organic conversion is completed with no subsidy to operations. All employees were trained in the principles of organic food production. The organic price premium was covered within existing budget by optimizing the budget and menu planning, minimizing food waste, increase production of homemade food, focusing on seasonal food, and optimizing meat and fish consumption.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates a large potential for public kitchens to increase the level of organic food procurement and suggest a broad spectrum of strategies to sustain the organic conversions with no subsidy to operations after conversion to organic food.

Keywords

Organic Conversion, Cost neutral, Public Procurement, Strategies, Sustainability